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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE

HONORABLE GEORGE POINDEXTER.

Senator in Congress from Mississippi.

Washington :

PRINTED BY DUFF GREEN.

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1835.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
THE HONORABLE GEORGE POINDEXTER,
SENATOR IN CONGRESS FROM MISSISSIPPI.

GEORGE POINDEXTER, one of the Senators of the United States from Mississippi, was born in the county of Louisa, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the year 1779. His ancestors were French Protestants, who left France for England to avoid the persecutions of Louis XIV, and emigrated soon afterwards to Virginia. His parents were of the Protestant religion, possessed of considerable wealth prior to the Revolution, which was greatly diminished by the events of that war. He was left an orphan at an early age, without an education, and with only a small patrimony, by which he was enabled to educate and qualify himself for the bar. He studied law in the city of Richmond, obtained a licence, and was compelled prematurely to engage in the practice, not having the means of prosecuting his studies to the extent which he desired. He practised in the Courts of his native State for a year or two with pretty good success, by which he was enabled to purchase a select library of law books, and in the year 1802, he emigrated to

the Mississippi Territory, which had been recently acquired from Spain under the Treaty of 1795—a Territory then including Alabama and Mississippi, the population being principally on the margins of the Mississippi and Tombigbee Rivers, amounting to not more than 10,000 persons in the whole. In this new country, without the patronage of friends, or even an acquaintance with a single inhabitant, having exhausted his pecuniary resources, he opened an office in the practice of the law at Natchez, which then contained but about three hundred inhabitants. Relying exclusively on his energies and the power of his own mind, he devoted himself with untiring industry to his profession. Although very young at that time, he very soon acquired a standing at the bar, equal, if not superior, to a majority of his competitors. His pecuniary affairs brightened, and the prospect was opened to him of certain independence and wealth, by adopting a course of prudence and perseverance. His attention, however, was very soon turned to political subjects, in the progress of which the income from his profession was considerably diminished. His political principles have been drawn from the Virginia School of 1798-99, having been engaged in the study of the law in Richmond at the very time when the great struggle, which resulted in the elevation of Thomas Jefferson to the Executive Chair of the Nation, in 1800, was agitating the country. From his early political principles he never departed, but has ever maintained and defended them with unwavering firmness. In 1803 he was appointed by the Governor of the Mississippi Territory Attorney-general of that district. In 1805, he was elected a member of the Territorial Legislature for the county of Adams, in which the city of Natchez is situated. In the following year he was

chosen delegate in Congress from that Territory, and in October 1807, he first took his seat in the House of Representatives of the United States.

It may be noted, that about the period of his election to Congress, he was appointed by the Acting-governor of the Mississippi Territory to visit that ill-fated man, Aaron Burr, at his boats, near the mouth of Bayau Pierre, where he had halted his flotilla in descending the river Mississippi, to carry into effect his mad projects of conquest and political ambition. He had an interview with Colonel Burr, which resulted in his surrender to the civil authorities of the Territory, where a premature attempt was made to prosecute him for treason, contrary to the opinion of Mr. Poindexter, who was still Attorney-general, and who moved the court to commit Colonel Burr until he should be demanded by the Governor of Kentucky, in which State it appeared that a military assemblage had taken place at the mouth of the Cumberland river, and where the offence charged had been committed, if that assemblage amounted to an overt act of treason.

It is certain that no such overt act had been committed in the Mississippi Territory. The Court, consisting of two judges, divided on the motion: it was therefore overruled. On the next day Colonel Burr made his escape. What happened afterwards in the case of this individual is matter of history.

Mr. Poindexter served three terms as the Representative of the Mississippi Territory in Congress, before it was admitted into the Union as a State; in this character, it is well known, he was entitled to debate, but not to vote, on

any question pending before the House. He was the friend of the general course of measures adopted under the administration of Jefferson and Madison, and frequently took a conspicuous part in debate in defence of their measures. His speech, made in defence of President Madison for dismissing Francis James Jackson, Minister from Great Britain, who superseded Mr. Erskine, after Mr. Canning disavowed the act of that minister in suspending the Orders in Council, has been published, and it attracted much attention at the time : this speech was supposed to be the best defence that was then made of that measure of Mr. Madison.

During the discussions on the political events which preceded the war against Great Britain, he warmly supported every measure which looked to resistance against the wrongs and injuries practised towards this country, both by England and France, at that memorable epoch in our history ; and when the final vote was taken on the declaration of war, he offered a paper which he moved to insert upon the journals, declaring in explicit terms his opinions in favor of the measure. The declaration was entered on the journal, as an act of justice to him who was deprived by the constitution of the privilege of voting.(1)

(1) Extract from the Journal of the House of Representatives, June 4, 1812 : when the bill, declaring war against Great Britain, was on its final passage.

Mr. Poindexter moved to have inserted on the Journal a declaration in the following words :—

George Poindexter, delegate from the Mississippi Territory, not having a constitutional right to record his suffrage on the Journals of the House, on the important question under consideration, and being penetrated with a firm conviction of the propriety of the measure, asks the indulgence of the House to

He served one session after the Declaration of War, at the close of which he accepted the appointment of Judge of the Superior Courts of Law and Equity in the Mississippi Territory, which was tendered to him by President Madison (with whom he had maintained official and personal relations, on the most friendly terms, during the whole period of his service in Congress), without solicitation. He remained on the bench till October 1817, and in the discharge of the arduous and delicate duties of this office, he gained as much, or perhaps more reputation, than he had acquired in any previous trust which had been confided to him. It is sufficient to say that he gave universal satisfaction, to the bar and to the country at large. (2) In 1817, he was chosen a member of the

express his own, and the sense of his constituents, in support of the honorable and dignified attitude which the government of his country has assumed, in vindication of its rights against the lawless violence and unprecedented usurpations of the Government of Great Britain.

(2) Address of the Mississippi Bar to the Hon. Geo. Poindexter, signed by the whole bar, with a single exception.

The undersigned, members of the bar in the Superior Courts of the Mississippi Territory, understanding that your honor is about to leave the Territory for some time, beg leave to express to you our high approbation of the *promptitude, ability, and impartiality*, with which you have discharged the arduous duties of your judicial station. You have introduced a system of practice into our courts, and preserved an order and decorum in the despatch of business, the beneficial effects of which have been felt in all classes of society. We will only add, that our best wishes for your health and happiness will attend you through life.

W. B. SHIELDS,
 LYMAN HARDING,
 JOHN TAYLOR,
 D. P. JANUARY,

CH. B. GREEN,
 J. KEETH,
 EDWARD TURNER,
 COWLES MEADE,

&c., &c.

convention, which formed a Constitution and State Government in the western part of the Mississippi Territory, that Territory having been divided into two States. He took a leading part in the convention; reported the Constitution, which may, without injustice to others, be said to have been shaped almost entirely by the hand of Mr. Poindexter. This Constitution might, and no doubt did, contain some defects, but in the main it will bear a favorable comparison with the Constitution of any other State in the Union. It has, however, unfortunately been almost wholly obliterated by a recent convention held in the State, and a new Constitution adopted, which transferred the entire power of appointment of office to the people in popular elections. Many other changes of the fundamental law of the State, of a novel and extraordinary character, were introduced into this new Constitution: it has been in operation but little more than a year, and already the intelligent part of the community are dissatisfied with it; and there can be no doubt that in a few years they will return to the principles of the first Constitution.

In October 1817, Mr. Poindexter was elected without opposition the first representative in Congress from the new State, which he had so largely contributed to rear up and establish.

In this situation he served only one term, and voluntarily declined a re-election in 1819. In the same year he was chosen Governor of the State by an immense majority of the people. This office he likewise held only one term, and retired from it in the year 1822. At the session of Congress of 1818-19,

it will be recollected that a strict investigation was instituted by the Committee on Military Affairs in the House of Representatives into the conduct of Major-General Andrew Jackson, in the prosecution of what is familiarly called the Seminole War, in which he was appointed to the chief command. The Committee reported resolutions of censure on that high military Commander for a violation of the Constitution in the assumption of powers exclusively confided to Congress, and for inhumanity in the alleged arbitrary sentence and execution of Arbuthnot and Ambrister. Mr. Poindexter warmly espoused the cause of the Hero of New Orleans; and his speech on that occasion has been distinguished by the general admission, that it contained the ablest vindication of the military conduct of General Jackson in that campaign that has ever been given to the public. General Jackson himself paid it an emphatic compliment, by handing a copy of it in pamphlet form to a friend of his, adding "Do, my dear sir, read this small pamphlet; it contains my defence."

In the year 1820, Mr. Poindexter, being then Governor of Mississippi, was requested, by an act of the Legislature, to revise and consolidate all the laws of a public nature in force within the State, and to prepare such additional laws as he might deem necessary to complete the Code of Statute Law, and organize the several Departments of the State Government. This duty he undertook, and in the year 1822, he reported to a special session of the General Assembly the revised code which he had prepared with great care, having bestowed his undivided attention to it for nearly two years. He had no assistance in the execution of this work.

The Legislature adopted, with very slight modifications, the entire system of Statute Law, as it was reported to them. In consideration of this service, the two Houses of the General Assembly passed a joint resolution, tendering their thanks to Mr. Poindexter for the ability and fidelity with which he had performed the duty assigned to him. For this arduous and important service, Mr. Poindexter would receive no compensation from the Treasury of the State; but the same Legislature which had adopted the code, directed the Governor of the State to present to him a splendid copy of *Rees' Cyclopaedia*, with the following inscription in gold letters on each volume: "*Presented by the State of Mississippi to George Poindexter, as a testimony of the gratitude of the State for his public services.*" These revised statutes may be seen in the Library of Congress.

Mr. Poindexter then retired to private life, and occupied himself for a few years in the practice of the law, in the Supreme and Superior Courts of Mississippi. While thus engaged, he became afflicted by severe indisposition, occasioned by the unskillful administration of medicine by his family physician. He lost the use of his limbs; and for five or six years he was unable to attend to business, public or private. During this period, he was offered the executive appointment to the Senate of the United States, which he declined. He was appointed Chancellor of the State in 1828, while under medical advice in the city of Philadelphia. This office he also declined to accept.

In the year 1829, the Legislature of Mississippi expressed an

anxiety to elect him to the Senate of the United States, his health having somewhat improved; but finding himself still unable to render the service required of him, in a letter addressed to the presiding officer of the House of Representatives, he desired that he might not be put in nomination for the appointment. In the following year he left Mississippi in extreme ill health, so very ill, that he did not expect to survive his severe afflictions. But he put himself under medical advice in the city of Louisville, in the State of Kentucky; and there his disease was checked, and hopes sprung up of his ultimate recovery. This fact being known in Mississippi, and a vacancy occurring during the summer of that year in the Senate of the United States, the appointment was again tendered to him by the Governor of the State, in the recess of the Legislature. After much hesitation, and by the advice of his friends, and of his physician, who recommended traveling and a change of climate, he accepted the appointment, with the reservation that if his health should not continue to improve, he would feel himself at liberty to withdraw from the high trust confided to him. He made a written communication to the members of the Legislature, representing his actual condition, and exposing to them his political opinions on the interesting topics which were then depending before the National Councils.(3) He proceeded on his journey to the

(3) *From the Natchez*: edited by James K. Cook, now the Editor of a Journal which defends the course of President Jackson's Administration.

GEORGE POINDEXTER.

One of the recent mails brought a letter from George Poindexter, Esq., addressed to the Editor of the *Natchez*, the contents of which being of a

city of Washington, his health gradually improving; but at the time he took his seat in the Senate, in December 1830, he was unable to walk without assistance, and was carried to

public nature, and intended as an exposition of the political opinions of the writer, showing the course he shall pursue as a Senator of Mississippi in the National Legislature, we conceive it our duty to lay it before the people. It will be observed however, that the communication is intended particularly for the consideration of the members of our State Legislature.

Although our political opinions vary essentially from those of Mr. Poindexter, and although we have no voice in the confirmation or rejection of his appointment, yet we cannot, situated as we are with respect to the public, forbear speaking of the gentleman as we think his merits demand, or according to the knowledge we have of him. Of all the citizens who from a very early period have been before the people of Mississippi, candidates for office, or have been placed in important situations, either by the people or by the Legislature, Mr. Poindexter is the one most distinguished for abilities and qualifications. In his professional capacity, when in the practice of the law, he stood at the head of the bar. As a member of the Legislature (and he was frequently elected by large majorities to that body), he was intelligent and efficient. As a Representative in Congress, it was admitted by enemies as well as friends, that his talents and his knowledge of the affairs of the Government, whether in relation to those of the State which he represented, or to the nation, well qualified him for the station. We do not propose to detract from the merits of other citizens who preceded Mr. Poindexter in the station of Governor of the State, or of those who succeeded him, when we say, that as far as the constitutional powers permitted, or circumstances afforded the opportunity, he showed himself the most competent of any to the duties which belong to it. As a Judge of the most important court then in the State, he had the confidence of the people at large; the close of his official duties proved he had been efficient and impartial. His enemies generally, we believe, accorded him their approbation.

In the early period of Mississippi, Mr. Poindexter first made his appearance as a political, as well as a professional aspirant; then to the character of the times, we may be allowed to attribute many of the failings charged to him; credit however should be given to him, when it is considered under how many opposing circumstances to his exertions he was enabled to rise to eminence; and, what will perhaps seem strange, that through many years, and many political changes, he has always been a consistent politician,

his seat in the arms of his servant. Under these circumstances, and while it remained doubtful whether he possessed the phy-

Mr. Poindexter is a democrat of the Jefferson school, never varying from the principles which it is understood to belong to it, with the exception of his opposition to the protecting system, which, by a reference to his writings, it may be seen Mr. Jefferson was a strenuous advocate.

As a popular declaimer, though he would not rank among the greatest, yet Mr. Poindexter always commanded attention. We have heard him at political meetings haranguing the multitude, in the State Legislature advocating some law, and in the National Councils debating some important question; and though he was not always fluent, he did not fatigue the audience: he spoke with spirit and to the purpose. His speech in the debate on the Seminole War, at a time of considerable excitement both in Congress and out of it, when every member of the House was at his station, and the lobby crowded; to say the least we can in commendation of him, Mr. Poindexter conferred greater credit on the State of Mississippi than we are disposed to think had been done before or since. As an individual, Mr. Poindexter was never a favorite with us; but we always admired his talents and appreciated his capacity to serve the State. Did we belong to the Jackson party, we should sooner see Mr. Poindexter, even upon crutches, representing the State of Mississippi in the National Councils, than any other man belonging to it; but as it is, and with his strong prejudices against the Tariff system, which we consider has already been of essential service to the nation, and which is daily giving evidence of the advantages the South will receive from it; with his prejudices, we say, for as such we view his opinions, we would as soon see the most indifferent aspirant of his party elected in his place—we could not vote for any one to misrepresent us, or the party to which we belong. We have said, Mr. Poindexter was always a democrat in his principles, and so he was in his conduct: he was always with the people and for the people. In the zenith of his popularity the country was divided between Federalists and Democrats, and the spirit of party was exceedingly high; and though the Federalists were a minority, yet Mr. Poindexter had to contend stoutly in defence of his principles, and to sustain himself; but he never wavered, never succumbed, not for a moment; never sought to accommodate himself to his opponents, to weaken the force of their objections to him; never temporized, in order to enlist them in his support. What he was with the people in a log cabin, with nothing but whiskey-grog to drink, and corn bread and bacon to eat, he was the same in a decorated parlor, with Madeira wine and plum pudding to feast upon. He associated with the poor and laboring men, not as if

sical ability requisite to discharge the duties of a Senator in Congress, he was elected by an almost unanimous vote of the

he condescended to them, but as their equal ; on foot, or on horse-back, or in a chariot, he was still the Democrat—still Poindexter. Be with whom he would taking a glass of grog to-day in a solitary hut, in the midst of a wilderness, he would as cordially pledge the back-woodsman, in a glass of wine, if he met him in a palace: he made no distinctions between men as to time or place. If he thought proper to elevate himself in manners or conversation to those who considered themselves of the higher orders, he did so more to conform himself to their ideas of society, than from a disposition to be aristocratic. Although we will not ever affect to compare him with Charles James Fox, yet there is a similarity in the genius and propensities of Mr. Poindexter to the great English statesman.

The following is an extract of the letter referred to in the above editorial remarks, addressed by Gov. Poindexter to the members of the Legislature, by whom he was chosen Senator in Congress ; by which it will be seen, he made no pledges to that body which are not comprised in the scope of general principles, avowed in the address as those by which his course in the Senate would be governed.

EXTRACT :

Had I been governed by considerations connected with my private interests alone, I should have returned home and arranged the business of my plantation, and other matters requiring my personal attention, before my departure for the seat of the General Government ; and in that event I could have been present at Jackson, to answer for myself such inquiries as might be thought necessary to a prudent and direct exercise of your suffrage, in the election of a citizen to represent the sovereignty of the State in the Senate of the Union. This course would have corresponded with my wishes and inclination, in reference both to my domestic concerns and the respect due to the members of the Legislature, which I shall ever be most ready to manifest on all proper occasions. I however indulge the belief, that my public services heretofore rendered to the State, and the political opinions which I profess, and which have remained unchanged during the whole of my life since I arrived at the age of maturity, will be viewed as a pledge of my future course and render unnecessary particular explanations, either in relation to my views of the local interests of the State which I have so long served, or the limited and literal construction of the powers delegated to the Federal Government by the Constitution of the United States, which I regard as the only safe-guard of our republican institutions and the sovereignty of the State Governments,

two Houses of the General Assembly of Mississippi. His health has continued to improve, and it may be considered at this time as entirely restored.

within their respective chartered boundaries. The dangers to be apprehended in administering the written Constitution of the Union, are *consolidation*, which *must* follow a *usurpation* of powers by construction, not granted in the charter or letter of attorney under which all the Departments of the Federal Government act; and a severance of the Union of the confederated States, which happen when it may, will owe its origin to federal encroachments on the reserved rights and independent sovereignty of the several States, by whose concessions and reluctant approbation the Government of the United States was erected and put in motion; guarded by restrictions and limitations, which it was then thought would amply protect the liberty of the citizen, and the inviolability of the rights not surrendered, and pre-existing in the parties to the compact of Union.

To avoid the unforeseen mischiefs and calamities which would result from a heedless precipitation to either of these extremes, is the highest duty of every statesman and patriot; and the surest means by which this desirable end may be attained, will be found in moderation, forbearance, and a sober appeal to the good sense and sound judgment of the great body of the people at large. Prudence would dictate a suppression of sectional excitement, even under the operation of measures unjust, unconstitutional, and injurious to the great and fundamental interests of our country, until oppression has grown into a system, and all hope of a return to the principles of the Constitution, and a fair distribution of burdens and benefits in the administration of our Government, have vanished.

Should ambition, combined with corrupt interested motives, lead a dominant party in this country to hazard the experiment of unequal laws, imposing heavy taxation on one portion of the nation for the exclusive benefit of another; or if a particular description of labor, peculiar to a large proportion of our industrious population, is made tributary to other descriptions of labor, to whom monopolies are granted by a usurpation of power not granted in the Constitution, which is the ark of our political safety; and if nothing can satiate the lust of power and gain, on which these tyrannical and unauthorized measures are based, but a perpetuation of their injustice, or the overthrow of our happy Union, and the liberty and equality which are the birth-right and pride of every American citizen; then indeed, will "forbearance cease to be a virtue," and patriotism will animate the oppressed people to rise in the majesty of their strength, and exclaim, under the standard of the Constitution, "Give us the

Mr. Poindexter came to the Senate of the United States with impressions and dispositions favorable to the administration of President Jackson. He had defended that dis-

Charter as it is written, and equal laws for the protection of our rights," or away with the tyrants who forge our chains, and tell us to be calm and submit to our sufferings, to promote what they are pleased to designate by the false and flattering name of the "general welfare!" May the enlightened and patriotic of all parties unite to avert a calamity so much to be deprecated by those who duly appreciate the blessings of a free government, founded on the confidence and affections, and not on the fears of the people!!

The present crisis in our political history may be truly considered important; and the principles involved in the controversy between the advocates of State Rights and those who contend for a Central Government,—splendid in its structure, unlimited in its powers, and supreme in all its acts; acknowledging no power on earth vested with authority to question the validity of its laws and ordinances, of which it claims to be the exclusive interpreters—must be viewed with anxiety and solicitude by every man, who seriously reflects on the vital consequences to all classes of society which rest on the ultimate decision of the question. Shall our form of government, however plainly defined, be radically changed by the chicanery of construction? and will the multitude sanction the innovation, under the delusive hope that they are to be gainers by the operation of assumed powers, to which no bounds can be set by human forecast, and which lead directly to the prostration of civil, political, and religious liberty? Can any people be free, where labor is made subservient to legislative "*regulation*;" and where one branch of domestic industry is taxed to give protection, encouragement, and exclusive privileges to another branch of industry, which, by way of distinction, is denominated "national or home industry?" All history teaches us, that in every country where human enterprise is restricted by penal enactments, and the arm of the laborer is guided by edicts emanating from the sovereign power, the people are *slaves*, whatever may be the nominal form of government exercising these high and despotic prerogatives. Whether the freemen of this nation will descend from the lofty attitude which they occupy in the civilized world, and consent to be thus governed, is a matter gravely submitted to their consideration.

You will discover, sir (what doubtless you were previously apprized of), by the preceding hasty remarks, that if chosen to represent you in the Senate of the United States, I shall on all occasions support a literal construction of the powers granted to Congress, and enumerated in the Constitution; and that powers not delegated in that instrument, but claimed by certain arbitrary rules

tinguished individual in the darkest hour of his public career ; he had advocated his election to the high station which he then filled, in the two preceding contests for that office. He

of construction, adapted to every emergency, and to every scheme of internal policy which interest or ambition may suggest, will meet my decided opposition in every form, however specious, in which they may be presented to the National Legislature. It may be asked with great force and propriety, of what value is a written constitution, erecting barriers between the several departments of power, transferring one portion to the Federal Government, which is *specific*, and reserving the residue to the States, as exercised by them in their sovereign capacity at the close of the Revolution, thus limiting each to its legitimate sphere of action ; if one of the parties may, under the guise of patriotism, mount the ramparts, and immolate by stratagem or force the salutary and wise distribution of sovereignty made by the framers of the Constitution for the preservation of our Republican institutions, and the protection of the life, liberty, and property of each individual belonging to the Republic, against the dangerous tendency of a consolidation of all power relating to our foreign intercourse or to the municipal relations appertaining to the several States, in one overwhelming National Government, wielding at its or its pleasure the purse and the sword of the nation for internal or external purposes ? I answer, that if such innovations on State Rights and public liberty are practised and tolerated by unconditional submission to each usurpation in succession, our written Constitution is a mockery on the common sense of mankind, and the question of *expediency* alone will very soon supersede all the guards which a jealous precaution had placed around the powers granted to the Federal Government, to preserve the purity of our system from corrupt combinations, who sing *hosannas to the people* while they violate with impunity the sacred compact of Union, which secures to every member of the Confederacy equal rights, and requires of them equal responsibilities and obligations in maintaining the empire of the laws and social order at home, and resisting foreign aggression on the rights, honor, and independence of our common country.

To bring back the Constitution to its primitive interpretation, and to restore internal tranquillity where it has been disturbed by unjust and oppressive legislation, and to render our laws uniform in their operation and effect on all parts of the Confederacy, are objects of deep and vital interest to the State of which I am a citizen, and which I may have the honor to represent in the National Legislature. I cannot claim the high qualifications which are requisite to the attainment of these desirable reforms in the laws which

was received by the President with manifestations of uncommon kindness, and assurances of his grateful recollections of the past services rendered him by the disinterested exertions of Mr. Poindexter, and a tender of his most unbounded confidence and good will. But Mr. Poindexter soon found that in the faithful discharge of his duties as a Senator, he could not approve all the measures recommended to the consideration of Congress by the President, and in a spirit of candor he frankly and freely communicated to that high officer his objections to the course of his administration. He objected particularly to the manner in which the patronage of office was dispensed, and the proscriptive policy which had been pursued. He informed the President distinctly, that it was his intention to support the measures of the Administration whenever, in his opinion, they were compatible with the public good; and when his mind doubted on the policy of any measure recommended by the Executive, he would incline to the support of the measure in deference to the opinion of the head of that department of the Government. This independent attitude and course of action did not accord, however, with the feelings and temper of President Jackson, who became more cool and distant every day to the man for whom

have been enacted without a proper regard to the great agricultural industry of the southern States, and in violation of the obvious meaning of the Constitution; but I may safely promise you fidelity and firmness, in co-operation with the friends of liberal principles and free trade throughout the Union, and my best endeavors to the full extent of my humble capacity, in resisting the entire system of monopolies, exclusive privileges, and bounties, so contrary to every principle of free government, and which now disgrace the Statute Book of this great Republic.

he had recently expressed so much gratitude and friendship. Unconditional submission to the Executive mandates was the tenure by which alone the friendly relations which had apparently subsisted between Mr. Poindexter and President Jackson could be preserved and maintained. To these conditions Mr. Poindexter could not and would not submit, holding himself bound by higher obligations than mere personal considerations in the discharge of his duties, to look exclusively to the welfare of his constituents and of the country at large, and to the preservation of the great principles of the Constitution, and the sanctity of the laws made in pursuance thereof. Acting on these principles, Mr. Poindexter was at first threatened with the displeasure of his constituents, who had shown strong partialities for President Jackson. This menace failing to produce the desired effect, he was openly denounced, and strong appeals were made to the people of Mississippi to unite in these denunciations, and for awhile they produced a powerful effect on the minds of a large portion of the people of that State. To produce the overthrow of a man who had done as much, if not more than any other individual in the nation to sustain the pretensions of President Jackson, a regular system of vituperation and abuse was organized by the cabal, who at that time and ever since have had possession of the mind, and control of the actions of the President. Presses were purchased in Mississippi, whose batteries were opened to misrepresent the conduct of Mr. Poindexter to the people of the State. Numerous correspondents connected with the Administration were actively engaged in writing letters to aid in the accomplishment of this object. Demagogues were employed to explore

the State and excite the resentment of the people against their Senator, and to get up public meetings to condemn his independent course.

In this warfare the popularity of President Jackson was the only weapon wielded by his partisans. The policy or propriety of measures was left entirely out of view, and the people were invoked to stand by the Old Hero, and prostrate all who should dare to question the wisdom of his administration or the purity of his motives. The patronage of office was resorted to in aid of this crusade, against a Senator who could not be induced by any considerations connected with his personal advancement to sacrifice the honor and best interests of the people whom he represented, and to disregard the Constitution and laws of his country to subserve political aspirants and combinations. Against this formidable array of executive influence Mr. Poindexter has remained firm and unmoved, relying on the integrity of his conduct and the good sense of the people, for his ultimate justification at the bar of public opinion. He has not been disappointed. After a long course of mal-administration, the errors of which have been covered by the mantle of popular delusion, the people have become satisfied, that to preserve the Constitution unimpaired, and to transmit to posterity the blessings of liberty, the novel and extravagant assumption of power claimed by President Jackson must be resisted, even at the sacrifice of their honest prejudices and partialities in his favor. Mr. Poindexter has now the satisfaction to find his course approved by the *intelligent* portion of the people of the State which he represents. Popular delusion has

at length vanished like the mist of the morning before the effulgent sunshine of truth and patriotism. The distinguished position which Mr. Poindexter has occupied, and the brilliant course which he has run in the Senate of the United States, are matters which belong to the history of the times, and are universally known to, and duly appreciated by his countrymen. The conspicuous part which he has taken in that body on all questions of great national importance, opposed as he was, on most of them, to the views of the cabal who surround the President and manufacture opinions in his name, has not failed to render him an object of their most embittered hostility, and of course he has been subjected to more than a due proportion of the reckless abuse and calumny which the laboratory of that cabal uniformly manufacture and promulgate against all who dare to question the infallibility of the idol whom they worship. He committed the unpardonable sin, for which, in the mind of President Jackson, there is no forgiveness, in his speech and vote on the nomination of Martin Van Buren as Minister to England. He held the casting vote on that occasion, and strong hopes were entertained that his pre-existing partialities for the President might induce him to cast his vote in favor of the nomination. It is certain that if Mr. Poindexter had looked only to his own political advancement by means of Executive patronage, he would not have hazarded his hopes and expectations by taking a step so decidedly opposed to the known wishes of President Jackson. But regardless of these considerations, and with a full knowledge of the sacrifices which he must incur by obeying the convictions of his own mind rather than the dictates of a selfish policy, he fearlessly and independently took the responsibility

of denying his advice and consent to the appointment of Mr. Van Buren to the high diplomatic trust to which he had been nominated. His best vindication will be found in the clear and forcible speech which he delivered on the occasion in secret session of the Senate, and which has since, by the removal of the injunction of secrecy, been given to the public.

From the moment he placed himself in that attitude of defiance against Executive dictation up to the present time, he has been the object of the most unmeasured and infuriated attacks of the press under the control of the Administration, which has been filled with the most unfounded libels and vulgar personal vituperations, designed to operate on the people of the State which he represents, and thereby to exclude him from a participation in the Councils of the Nation. His determination of purpose, directed on all occasions to the attainment of ends connected with the public good, and the discriminating powers of mind which he displayed on all subjects presented for his consideration, were alike offensive and inconvenient to the political aspirants who placed their hopes of preferment on a judicious distribution among their favorite partisans of the patronage of office, which they very significantly and emphatically denominate "the spoils of victory." It is not therefore surprising, that all the means at the disposal of the Executive should have been united to the fulminations of a pensioned press, to effect a purpose so desirable as the expulsion of Mr. Poindexter from the Senate of the United States.

As we have before said, his political principles and opinions were formed at an early period of his life, in the Virginia

school, and have been carried out by his acts in every public station which he has filled. To the Legislature by whom he was chosen to the Senate, he made a frank and candid exposition of these principles, accompanied by the declaration that he would invariably be governed by them in the discharge of the high trust which had been conferred on him by the Governor of the State, if the selection should be approved by the vote of the General Assembly. He has, among other things equally unfounded and ridiculous, been charged with a violation of his pledges, made at the time of his election; that he had given a pledge without reserve to support the measures which might be recommended to Congress by President Jackson. We have thought that the best answer which could be given to this foolish and absurd allegation, would be found in the letter addressed by Mr. Poindexter, who was then absent from the State, to the members of the Legislature upon whom the choice of a Senator devolved, in November 1830: an extract from this letter, together with a copious editorial article, taken from a public journal opposed in politics to Mr. Poindexter, will be found in a preceding note, No. 3, by which it will be seen that general principles alone are therein adverted to, and that neither President Jackson nor his Administration were referred to in any manner whatever. He was at that time, and has continued to be, uniformly opposed to a tariff of duties on foreign importations, as a substantive measure for the protection of domestic manufactures, and he has sustained with zeal and ability that side of the question since he took his seat in the Senate. He has supported the Bill which passed the two Houses of Congress in the year 1833, distributing the net proceeds of the sales of

the public lands among the several States, for the purposes of education and internal improvements. He considered the distribution highly favorable and beneficial to all the States, and especially to the new States, in favor of which the provisions of the Bill are undeniably liberal. He demonstrated that the State which he represented, being one of the new States, would be benefited by the distribution proposed, and the grant of land for internal improvements and education, to the amount of more than three millions of dollars. On these grounds, connected with the general policy of the system, he unhesitatingly gave it his support. The measure was approved by large majorities of both Houses of Congress, at the session which closed on the 4th of March 1833; but the Bill was retained by the President, and not returned to Congress until the next session, when his objections could not be overruled by the constitutional majority of two thirds. On this subject, as on most others of importance brought before the Senate, Mr. Poindexter delivered an able and elaborate argument, reviewing the sources from which the title of the United States to the public domain had been acquired, and the manner in which it had been disposed of, both under the old Confederation and the existing Constitution.

It will be remembered, that early in December, 1832, President Jackson first put forth the famous Proclamation, in relation to the ordinance of the Convention then recently held in South Carolina, declaring the acts of Congress imposing duties on foreign importations for the protection of domestic manufactures, and not for revenue to meet the necessary expenditures of the Government, to be unconstitutional, void, and not law within

the limits and jurisdiction of that State. This was a most critical and highly interesting epoch in the political history of this country. The stability of the Union was threatened; civil war, with all its disastrous and bloody consequences, seemed to hover over the land, and the heart of every *real* patriot sickened within him at the dark and gloomy prospect before us. Parties, between whom there had previously existed no union of sentiment or sympathy of feeling or action, combined on this momentous occasion, and thereby placed the President in an overwhelming majority in the Senate. The Proclamation was followed up by a special Message, communicated to both Houses of Congress on the 12th day of January, 1833, recommending a resort to arms and the physical energies of the country, to bring the State of South Carolina into submission to Federal authority. In compliance with the recommendations of the President, the Committee on the Judiciary forthwith reported a bill, the provisions of which put at the disposition of the President, to be used according to his own discretion, the army and navy, and the militia of the United States, without limitation, either in respect to numbers or the expenditure of the public money which might be incurred in the prosecution of his military operations. The bill was of a general character, although evidently intended at that time to operate exclusively on South Carolina. This was a favorite measure of President Jackson, and its adoption was urged with uncommon zeal and perseverance. Mr. Poindexter was alike opposed to the broad doctrines of the Proclamation and Message, and to the unlimited powers given to the President by the enactments incorporated in the bill. He felt that he was in a hopeless minority, but, nothing daunted by this, he met the bill (commonly

called the "Force Bill ") upon its first appearance in the Senate with fearless and fierce rebuke, and continued strenuously to attack it in every stage of its progress to its final passage. On this occasion he delivered, perhaps, the ablest speech he had ever made on any previous occasion. It was widely circulated, in connection with the speeches of Mr. Calhoun and Mr. Webster, throughout the Union, and was regarded as a vigorous and powerful defence of the rights reserved to the separate States of the Confederacy at the adoption of the Federal Constitution. This speech enlarged and illustrated his reputation as a statesman, and his capacity as a public debator in every quarter, and among politicians of every denomination. There were, indeed, many, both in the North and the South, who did not accord with him in some of his views and opinions, but none were unwilling to admit the powerful arguments by which they were enforced. The State Rights party, particularly, owe him a debt of gratitude for this manly and dignified effort in support of their cause. This feeling has been strongly manifested in the Southern States, and we believe, as a corollary of the elementary doctrines so ably maintained by Mr. Calhoun, the speech of Mr. Poindexter is held in higher estimation by that class of politicians than any other which was made in the great contest in 1833, between the advocates of the Proclamation and Force Bill on the one side, and the advocates of State Rights on the other. His clear and discriminating mind, and adroitness in debate, may be considered as fully sustained by this speech, if it stood alone on the Journal of Congressional Debates. But there are numerous other efforts of his, which would not disparage the first statesman in our country.

We have thus briefly sketched some of the prominent acts of Mr. Poindexter, in the Senate of the United States; bringing our narrative down to the adjournment of Congress, in March 1833. During the recess, a most important and unprecedented measure was adopted by President Jackson, which threw the whole country, hitherto prosperous and tranquil, into a state of deep distress and alarm. By means of his power over appointments to office, and of removal therefrom at pleasure, the President in an official paper, read to his Cabinet in the month of September of that year, ordered his then Secretary of the Treasury, Wm. J. Duane, to remove from the Bank of the United States the public money which had been deposited there by law, and in accordance with the provisions of the charter granted by Congress to that institution. The exercise of such discretion as the President had assumed over the public money deposited in the Bank of the United States, was by the terms of the charter expressly confided to the Secretary of the Treasury, as the constitutional guardian of the Treasury of the United States. This officer, having refused to take the step which had been dictated by the President, and claiming the right to judge for himself when it might be proper, for the safety of the public money, to cease to deposit it in the Bank of the United States, was forthwith unceremoniously removed from office for this cause alone, and an individual appointed in his place to carry out the views of the President in this respect, which was accordingly done. This new fiscal arrangement, operating directly and most injuriously on the currency, and on public and private credit, cast a gloom over the whole country, and

particularly the manufacturing and commercial towns and cities, never before witnessed since the foundation of the Government. Congress assembled in December, 1833, under circumstances the most embarrassing, arising out of the excited state of public feeling, and the extraordinary assumptions of power claimed and exercised by the Executive in defiance of the Constitution and Laws, by which that Department assumed a supreme control by indirect means over the national Treasury—thus uniting the purse and the sword of the nation in the hands of one person. To counteract these strides to arbitrary power, and restore the Constitution and Laws which had been violated to their legitimate operation and effect, was a duty which devolved alone on the Senate, in consequence of the divided state of the public Councils at that period. The power of the Senate being merely negative without the co-operation of the House of Representatives and the President, which it was hopeless to expect, the difficulties thrown in the way of the patriotic efforts of this body of enlightened men, were seen and felt to be insurmountable. These difficulties could only be overcome by the force of truth, illustrated by arguments drawn from the theory of our free Institutions, and solemn appeals to the great body of the people to come to the rescue of their violated Constitution, and preserve their liberties from total overthrow, by the exercise of their suffrages in the approaching popular elections. The whole subject underwent the most mature and deliberate consideration, and drew forth a discussion on the great principles of our Government, which has rarely, if ever, been surpassed for eloquence, depth of research, and soundness of

argument, on any previous occasion which had occurred in the political history of our country. In these discussions Mr. Poindexter bore a conspicuous part. His indignation at the arbitrary encroachments of lawless power was roused to the highest pitch. He saw that the Constitution, which had wisely confided the disposition of the public Treasury to the Representatives of the people and the States, had been disregarded and trodden under the feet of a reckless Chief Magistrate. He saw the chartered rights of a Corporation granted by Congress for high considerations connected with the public welfare, violated at the will of the Executive, without allowing to that corporation the benefit of a judicial investigation into its conduct, and the right of trial by jury, which is secured to it by the express provisions of the Charter. He saw the power of appointment and removal from office perverted from its proper object, and so construed by the President as to render his authority paramount to the Law, and effectually to control the powers delegated to every other Department of the Government, legislative and judicial. He saw, in short, in the doctrines advanced* by the President to sustain his novel and dangerous interpretation of the Constitution, this Government reduced to the simple machine of one supreme Executive head, acknowledging no power on earth capable of resisting his mandates; except indeed the people themselves, in their sovereign capacity, might interpose and produce a change of measures by a change of rulers. He saw in this chain of usurpations, the portentous signs of a gradual approach to arbitrary Government, at which his love of liberty revolted. No freeman, in his opinion, could regard such outrageous indefensible tyranny

with feelings of cold indifference, whatever might be his confidence in the high public functionary with whom they originated. He reviewed these measures with an eye of strict scrutiny, and in a spirit of keen and bitter rebuke, which did not fail to touch to the quick the authors of such unparalleled mischiefs on all the great interests of the American people. His speeches are remarkable for a bold defiance of power, sarcasm, irony, and ridicule; weapons which few men wield with more skillful effect than himself. His words fall on his adversaries in debate with a force difficult to be resisted, and with an effect as pointed as needles. Whatever he said cut, and deeply cut, all who might stand in opposition to the principles which he advocated. Hence there is no man in this country hated with so deadly a hatred as he is by the Chief Magistrate, whose measures he has so fearlessly resisted. Hence too, the gratuitous abuse which has been lavished on him, flowing from the same source, and promulgated to the public by the cabal, to which he was the first to give the significant name of "*Kitchen Cabinet*." They vainly sought to drive him from his purposes by the frowns of power; and the temptations of patronage were thrown before him with as little effect. Failing to subdue his firmness of mind, and to render him a subservient instrument in the hands of the Executive, their next effort was to degrade him in public estimation, and particularly with his own constituents, by a resort to foul personal abuse and vituperation on his private character. For this purpose they invented the most malignant falsehoods, resting not even upon the shadow of a shade in the form of evidence to support them.

These they circulated through the pensioned press of the Administration, from Maine to Louisiana, which it is evident were indulged in to a much greater excess than they would have been, because it was well known that these attacks were gratifying to the feelings of the President whom they served, it being a remarkable trait in the character of General Jackson, more than in the character of any other man who has risen to power in modern times, to feel towards those who had been his friends while he was seeking the high station which he occupies, a hatred more vindictive and bitter than he feels towards his most inveterate enemies. We deem it proper here to notice a singular fact in this crusade against the character, public and private, of the subject of this memoir, that the whole of the malignant aspersions which his persecutors have attempted to cast on him, rest on factious charges, made from time to time by his political opponents in years gone by; some of them going back twenty, others thirty years past. These are now revived, and, assuming the boldness of truth, are given to the public as new matter which has never been controverted. Thus the minds of many honest men have been doubtless influenced to form opinions in direct opposition to the conclusions to which a full knowledge of the whole truth would lead them.

It ought, perhaps, to be a consolation to a statesman who has for a great number of years occupied so large a space in the public eye, to find that the utmost scrutiny to which his actions can be subjected leaves his political enemies without a loop on which to hang an accusation against him;

while they are driven in despair to the columns of some factious newspaper or pamphlet long since buried in oblivion, to ferret out some stale calumny which met its death the moment it was uttered. It is worthy of remark, that since the date of all the transactions which have been brought forward at this day to cast a shade over the reputation of Mr. Poin-dexter, he has received the highest evidences of the confidence of the people among whom he has resided, and where these matters are alleged to have been of general notoriety. He was at that time, and has ever since been supported in all his political aspirations up to the moment of his opposition to the arbitrary course of President Jackson, by the same party and the same men who now assail him for acts, which, if true, ought to have withdrawn from him the good opinion of every honorable man in the community. If then these things be true, ill do they appear as his accusers; but as they were at the time of their promulgation received and treated with contempt as the outpourings of political factions, and were instantly nailed to the counter, stamped with the infamy of vile fabrications for party purposes, what ought a virtuous and enlightened people to think of the libellers who now propagate them to wound the fame of him whom they delighted to honor, and who now fills a seat in the most august tribunal on earth by their united suffrages! Among the numerous corrupt and wretched calumnies which have been thus brought before the American People, to gratify the malice of President Jackson against his friend in the hour of his utmost difficulty, is one, which, with a full belief that it has been revived at the instigation of the President himself, we deem it proper to

notice, in order that its refutation may form a part of this biographical sketch. It was met, by the proofs which we annex, at the threshold ; and in 1815, the whole matter having been thoroughly investigated, resulted in the utter shame and disgrace of the combination of libellers, who made the foul attempt to lessen the high standing of Mr. Poindexter, by ascribing to him a want of that chivalric firmness and valor of which he has given so many proofs throughout his whole life.

His personal and political enemies at the period above mentioned had in their employment a newspaper, edited by a miserable insolvent, the columns of which were almost exclusively devoted to the most unmeasured abuse of Mr. Poindexter, then a Judge in the highest Court of Law and Equity in the Mississippi Territory, as stated in a preceding part of this memoir. One of this small, but active and vigilant party, who happened to be in New Orleans a few days before the British forces re-embarked, hearing that Mr. Poindexter had visited New Orleans on the 8th of January 1815, put his imagination in requisition, and concocted a story, which he addressed in the form of a letter to the editor of the press in their employment, magnifying a fact of no earthly importance into a grave charge that Mr. Poindexter, acting as a volunteer Aide-de-camp to Major General Carrol, of the Tennessee militia, at the commencement of the attack made on the entrenched camp of General Jackson by the British army on the morning of the 8th of January, 1815, mounted his horse and rode in full speed to New Orleans, where he remained until the enemy retreated.

The editor published this letter, which was followed up by a variety of ridiculous editorial articles, giving other and more extravagant versions of the supposed flight. The whole was intended for political effect; it was of short duration, having resulted on the first touch of investigation to the injury of the party who resorted to that expedient to destroy a man eminently useful to the country, and to elevate still higher that man in the confidence and affections of his fellow citizens. We proceed to give a summary of facts, comprising a brief narrative of the transactions of that day connected with this affair. 1. Mr. Poindexter being a high judicial officer of the United States, and of course not subject to militia duty, when he heard of the arrival of a British fleet and transports in the Bay of Mexico, and the capture of our squadron of gunboats in Lake Boume, left his residence near Natchez, and repaired with as little delay as the distance rendered practicable to New Orleans, for the purpose of witnessing personally the great events which were soon to happen in the neighborhood of that city, and to perform any service which fell within the range of his limited military knowledge in the defence of the country, against the formidable enemy by whom it was assailed. The mere example was calculated to animate the patriotic citizens of Mississippi to put forth all their energies in expelling the foe from our soil. It had that effect. 2. Mr. Poindexter arrived in camp below New Orleans on the 29th of December, 1814, where he remained, performing voluntarily every duty required of him by the commanding General of the division of the army to which he had attached himself, until the close of the campaign. He became in a few days one of the military

family of General Carrol, as a volunteer Aid, in which character he acted until his resignation was tendered and accepted in the following satisfactory, if not flattering terms:—

Your resignation as a volunteer Aide-de-camp to the division of the army under my command, is accepted. In retiring from the army you will carry with you my affectionate wishes for your safe return to your family and friends; and I shall remember with pleasure your *zeal* and *meritorious* efforts, in rendering service to me and to your country.

W. CARROL,

Major-General, Commanding Division Tennessee Militia.

There were two attempts made by the enemy on the lines of the American army after Mr. Poindexter arrived in camp; the one partial and without effect, or any incident worthy to be recorded; the other, the memorable assault of the 8th of January, which was triumphantly repelled, and decided the issue of the campaign. On the night of the 31st of December, the enemy erected several temporary batteries near to the defences, behind which the forces commanded by General Jackson were posted. At eight o'clock, on the morning of the 1st of January, 1815, when the thick fog of the morning began to clear away, the enemy opened a brisk fire from their batteries on our breast-work, which was returned by our artillery along the whole line, and continued without intermission until about three o'clock in the evening. The cavalry were posted in a skirt of woods on the extreme left, so as to be out of the range of the cannon shot and Congreve rockets of the enemy, and to act if circumstances should require their assistance. The regular troops and militia were ordered to lie close behind

the breast-work, and in ditches immediately in its rear. None but the artillerists and engineers were engaged on that day. Mr. Poindexter at that time was a spectator in camp, having arrived only two days before. He rode down to the lines very early in the morning, and when the fire of the enemy commenced, he was standing at the breast-work in company with Captain Davis, now Marshal of the Western District of Pennsylvania, a brave and gallant officer. They remained together a few moments, when Captain Davis repaired to his command, and Mr. Poindexter, after looking on the scene and witnessing the effects of the cannonade on the house in which the commanding General was quartered, against which it was particularly directed, a short time, mounted his horse and rode up the Levy about one half mile, and remaining in that part of the encampment perhaps one hour, returned to the breast-work, and continued there or near to it until the firing ceased. He had no duty to perform. He did not belong to the army. But it seems that the party by whom he was assailed in 1815, by the most untiring efforts to sustain themselves, were enabled to obtain certificates from two of *their own partisans*, obscure ignorant men, in which they state very concisely that they saw Mr. Poindexter, on the morning of the 1st of January, riding briskly *towards New Orleans!* This they might have said with perfect truth; and with equal propriety that they saw him riding *towards* Baton Rouge, or Natchez, or Nashville, as his face was in the direction of all these places. But every material fact is carefully suppressed. These poor creatures might have been fully justified in certifying that they saw the regiment of cavalry commanded by

the gallant and intrepid Hinds, repair to the forests to be out of the range of the shot of the enemy; they might have stated the apparently disgraceful fact, that they saw the Colonel of a regiment of infantry lying in a ditch, and so of the whole army, behind the entrenchment! How ridiculous! A single fact would explain the *enigma*, and exhibit the naked truth as it really existed. No *conflict* took place except between the artillerists of the contending armies; and all others were ordered to put themselves in places of security. And yet these infamous certificates, given nearly twenty years ago, which reflected only dishonor on those who used them at that day are now put forth by high authority as matters of grave import, to wound the sensibility and standing of a man, who is too honest to be bribed by patronage, and too firm to be awed by the menaces of power, backed by popular delusion, into submission to the mandates of an imperial dictator.

“Oh! shame, where is thy blush?”

This miserable slang of the party presses of the day might well be considered unworthy of notice; it certainly would have been so considered, but for the high official functionary who has maliciously caused it to be promulgated. For the same reason we subjoin the statement of two respectable gentlemen, showing precisely the causes and circumstances which led to the visit of Mr. Poindexter to New Orleans, on the 8th of January, 1815.(4) By this document it will be seen, that at

4 The following is an extract of a letter from the Hon. George Poindexter, Senator in Congress from the State of Mississippi, to General David Dickson,

the commencement of the attack on the morning of that day, Mr. Poindexter was wounded by the effects of a cannon ball, which passed through the room in which he with others slept the preceding night; that he was disabled for some time, and thereby rendered incapable of any physical exertion; that in this situation he was advised to go to the city and obtain aid

containing clear and explicit information of the grounds on which alone he could be induced to yield his support to the administration of President Jackson :—

“ *Warm Springs, Va., August 13, 1831.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I received your favor from Jackson, addressed to me at Washington city, and I am for the first time informed that you had not seen my letter addressed to you at Vicksburg.

“ You state that an impression was made on the public mind by the contents of that letter, or some other matter, that I have deserted the *Jackson* cause. There is no foundation for the rumor, unless my adhesion to *principle* and the known rights of my constituents is considered a desertion of that *cause*. I cannot consent to *worship* men; I bow only at the shrine of principles; and when these are departed from by any man in power, be he Jackson, Calhoun, Clay, or any one else, I depart from him, so far as his actions conflict with the good of the country and the rights of my constituents. If this is heresy, then am I heretic; but I know the people of Mississippi too well to suppose for a moment that they wish me to sacrifice *them* on the altar of personal ambition or private interests. So far as General Jackson conforms his actions to the Constitution and the good of the American people, he will have my hearty support, and no farther. No honest man would expect or desire more. General Jackson has done much good for the country, which I duly appreciate, and award him my thanks for the benefits resulting from these measures; but it is undeniable that he lends his ear too readily to individuals near his person who are incompetent to advise him, and unworthy of public confidence; they sometimes lead him into errors which no one deplors more than I do, because they operate against the cause which I have warmly espoused, and tend to bring into power men whose principles I cannot approve. Such men speculate upon the capital of the “Old Hero” without paying interest; and it will be well if they do not exhaust the principal before the end of his term. You have doubtless seen all that has passed at Washington concerning the late Cabinet, &c. These events have withdrawn many of the warm supporters of General Jackson; but if the pending contest for the Presi-

and refreshments, which could not be had at his quarters; that after some hesitation he consented to the proposal, and that he "*left camp after the firing had ceased on both sides;*" that having effected the object of his visit, he immediately returned, and resumed the discharge of the duties assigned him. This is the history of this whole matter, which has been

dential chair is confined to Clay, my opinion is that the President will be re-elected."

Copy of a letter from J. W. Hamilton and W. L. Alexander, of Tennessee, to George Poindexter, stating the time and circumstances of his visit to New Orleans on the 8th of January, 1815.

"Natchez, February 14, 1815.

"DEAR SIR,—In reply to your letter of this date, I take great pleasure in stating the time and circumstances of your visit to New Orleans on the 8th of January. I have seen with regret several incorrect statements published on that subject in a paper printed in the town of Washington, Mississippi Territory, said to have been written by some person in New Orleans. On the morning of the 8th of January, Mr. William L. Alexander and myself were in New Orleans, and hearing the fire at camp we mounted our horses and rode down as soon as possible. We arrived there before the action was closed. We saw nothing of you on the road. After the British had retreated we called at General Carrol's quarters, where we saw yourself and General Smith together. Observing that you had your arm in a sling, I inquired as to the cause, and was informed that you had received a wound very early that morning from a cannon ball which passed through your room, and that your arm and side were considerably injured. Mr. Alexander and myself being about to ride, General Smith, or some one in the room, observed to you that you had better have your horse saddled and ride with us to Orleans, to have your arm attended to and get some refreshment, which could not be had in camp. I also insisted on your going for similar reasons, which you ultimately agreed to, and we rode in together. *We left camp after the firing had ceased on both sides.* We stopt frequently on the Levee to look at the British troops on the opposite side of the river, and particularly to view Dr. Flood's house, which was on fire. We also halted several times to converse with gentlemen coming from the city. The same evening I saw you again in camp, and was happy to find you able to go about.

I am, sir, respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. W. HAMILTON."

"I certify that the above statement is correct.

W. L. ALEXANDER."

so disgracefully tortured into a precipitate flight at the "commencement of the action, while the bloody conflict was raging with its utmost violence!" To this clear and explicit evidence much more might be added of the same tenor and import; but it is deemed to be unnecessary, as the facts are undeniable, and are placed beyond the possibility of doubt. But the subject was not permitted to rest at this point; for Mr. Poin-dexter, on his return home, finding his conduct most grossly perverted and misrepresented, enclosed the letters which had been published to Major-General Carrol and the Adjutant-general of the division of the army under his command. From Colonel Grayson, the Adjutant-general, he received the most conclusive and satisfactory reply, which will be found below, in Note 5. These papers speak for themselves, and need no

(5) The following is the answer of the Adjutant-general in reply to that communication :—

"New Orleans, February 12, 1815.

"DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to find, by the extract from a Washington paper which you have enclosed, that you have been calumniated. On the receipt of your letter with its enclosure, our General (Carrol) and a number of the officers of our division, have instructed me to return you *their thanks* for the services rendered by you during the siege at the breast-work below New Orleans. The writer of the letter in question is mistaken when he says you are held in contempt by us : far from it. No, sir ; you are not held in contempt by us. I certainly ought to know the services which you have rendered, as I held you on my roster and detailed you for night duties, as well as all others required ; and I can say with truth, that you relieved myself and all the rest of our family from much hard labor in our worn out state during the siege.

I am, sir, respectfully,

Your obedient servant.

P. GRAYSON,

Adjutant-general, Tennessee Militia."

comment. But to satisfy the utmost scruple of incredulity itself, Mr. Poindexter felt it to be a duty which he owed to his own character to institute two prosecutions for libels against the editor of the paper, in the columns of which he had been so repeatedly calumniated. The editor was notoriously insolvent, and in the prison bounds where he kept his printing establishment; but he was the only person known liable to these prosecutions.

The trial took place on the spot, where the truth of the matters charged as libellous might, if true, have been readily proven, and when the facts were fresh in the recollection of every one. The editor was convicted on both indictments, and sentenced to pay a fine of one thousand dollars, and to imprisonment in the common jail of the county for three months. The fine was moderate in consequence of the poverty of the defendant. It has never been paid. The annexed report of the trial by the presiding Judge will suffice to put every thing connected with these antiquated slanders forever at rest.(6) They have been renewed to gratify the

(6) The following is the report of the presiding Judge on the occasion :—

“Spring Plains, Claiborne County, M. Territory, July 28, 1815.

“DEAR SIR,—Your favor of the 6th instant was not received by me until the 23d. I was unavoidably prevented from answering it by the succeeding mail. I hope however that this delay will not be of any very serious disadvantage to you. In that letter you wish my answers to the following queries :

“1st. Whether I did not preside in the trial of Andrew Marschall, for sundry libels printed in his newspaper against you ?

worst passions of the human heart, and for the accomplishment of the most unworthy ends. We have bestowed so much attention to them as to disabuse the public mind, and to satisfy candid men of all parties of the great injustice which has been done to Mr. Poindexter by the unexampled licentiousness of the press in the pay of the Administration of President Jackson.

The preceding narrative of facts, drawn from authentic

“ 2d. Whether under our laws the defendant has not a right to give the truth of the matter charged as libellous in evidence ?

“ 3d. Whether in that case the attempt was or was not made, and whether you did not permit him to go into a specification of any thing his witnesses could state concerning your conduct at any period since your residence in this country ?

“ 4th. Whether, after occupying four days on the trial, he established any one fact which reflected the least dishonor on your moral character ; and whether the defendant’s counsel did not in the argument abandon the ground of justification altogether ?

“ In answer I have to state, that I did preside in the trial of Andrew Marschall on two indictments for libels printed in his newspaper, called the “ *Washington Republican*,” against you. Under our laws the defendant in such cases has a right to give in evidence, in his defence, the truth of the matter charged as libellous ; and this privilege the defendant on that occasion availed himself of to the *fullest extent*. He was permitted at *your instance* to go into a particular specification of all the circumstances relative to any transaction of yours with others, whether of a professional or private nature, since your residence in this country. After a trial, which occupied three or four days, your character exhibited as much purity as any man’s could have done which had been subjected to such rigid scrutiny ; for the trial having taken place in the county wherein your residence had been fixed since your first arrival in the country, an opportunity was the better afforded to exhibit evidence relative to every transaction of yours in which any kind of dispute had arisen with others ; and that evidence, too, derived from witnesses who were parties against you in these disputes, and whom, though honest, might be fairly supposed to be much under the influence of self-interest in forming the

documents, most of them official, demonstrates that Mr. Poin-dexter, from a sincere desire to be of some service in defending his country in the hour of danger, although exempt from military duty by the high judicial station which he filled at the time, voluntarily repaired to New Orleans on the first approach of the enemy, threw himself into camp, and freely partook of all the fatigues, hardships, privations, and dangers, with his countrymen during the siege; that when he could no longer be useful there, the enemy having relinquished

opinions of your conduct, about which they were to testify: and no person who heard the trial can be of opinion that the opportunity which was then afforded was in the least neglected, but that it was pursued with the most rigid assiduity. Indeed it was matter of much surprize to many, whose minds had been somewhat affected by so many scandalous charges as had been published in the defendant's newspaper, that something was not produced in evidence which would at least have cast a shade over your character.

"After the trial was over, I heard a gentleman of "high standing and great respectability" (and who was not one of your warmest friends), declare that he was never more disappointed in his expectations than on hearing the evidence delivered in that trial; for after so much had been said and written relative to your character, he did expect to have heard something proved which would have placed it in a very unfavorable point of view; but so far from that, he was well satisfied that the fairest character among us which had had so many transactions with the world, could not have appeared more fair after having been subjected to such a rigid examination, embracing every transaction for a period of fourteen or fifteen years. I have heard several other gentlemen express themselves in similar terms.

"In the argument of the cause, the defendant's counsel did not pretend to have proved the truth of the matter charged as libellous, but rested the defence of their client on the latitude which ought to be given to the liberty of the press, and the propriety of taking by means of the press a wide range in scrutinizing the conduct of public agents.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your most obedient and very humble servant,

WALTER SEAKE."

his designs upon New Orleans, he resigned his situation as a volunteer Aide-de-camp to General Carrol, in order to return home; that his resignation was accepted with an expression of the thanks of the General for his "meritorious services to the army and the country;" that the same declaration was in substance repeated after the promulgation of the calumnies before noticed, by the order of the General and with the approbation of the officers of his division, in the official letter addressed to Mr. Poindexter, at Natchez, by Colonel Peter Grayson, Adjutant-General of the division of the Tennessee militia; that the transactions of his whole life were scrutinized by the most rigid investigation, unrestrained by the forms of law, in the trial of indictments for these very libels, and that the defendant was convicted, fined, and imprisoned, and thereby the purity of his character in all his social relations, was triumphantly vindicated in a court of the highest criminal jurisdiction in the country, where all these matters were familiar to the people at large. He has since that period been honored to the full extent of his political ambition, with every high and responsible station which his fellow-citizens could bestow on him. Is it not wonderful that after all these testimonials of his merits as a public man, and of his private virtues, running through a period of more than thirty years, we should now be called on to repel calumnies the most infamous in their origin, the most harmless in their inception, on him at whose fame they were pointed, and long since numbered among the things which all men of honor would desire should be forgotten and buried in oblivion? That the necessity to do so has forced itself on

us must be ascribed to the vindictive malice of his persecutors, stimulated by the dread of his commanding talents, his patriotism, and his inflexible resistance to arbitrary power. Passing from these unpleasant topics, we resume our sketch of his career in the National Senate.

Senator Poindexter, as we have stated in a sketch of the life of Mr. Sprague, when the memorable Protest of President Jackson against the right of the Senate, as one department of the Government, to express an opinion that the official acts of the Executive on any occasion were in derogation of the law and the Constitution, was the first to meet that daring and unprecedented document. He took the floor at the instant the Secretary concluded its reading, and submitted a motion that "the paper be not received by the Senate." It was a position which any American statesman and patriot would have been proud to occupy. The honor of first meeting with bold defiance and indignant scorn the unparalleled assumptions of power, and the dangerous doctrines until that time never advanced in this country by any political party, which were contained in this protest; and of compelling its author on the very next day to send to the Senate a Supplemental Message, retracting or attempting to mystify these doctrines and assumptions of power, was no common honor. He sustained the motion in a short but highly animated and comprehensive speech. Tyranny for the first time in this country had thrown off the mask, and hazarded the most unlimited claims to regal prerogatives, embracing in their whole extent the right to control every other department of the Government, and to concentrate, either directly or indirectly, all power, legis-

lative, executive, and judicial, in the Chief Magistrate. The custody of the public property of every description, whether it consisted of lands, ships, military stores, bank-notes, or gold and silver, were asserted to belong to the President by virtue of powers which "pre-existed the Constitution," and of which he could not be deprived by law, without an amendment of that instrument. The Senate was threatened with annihilation, its legitimate powers as a branch of the National Legislature denied, and constitutional liberty itself was overshadowed by the cloud of despotism which hovered over the land, and menaced the overthrow of the free institutions handed down to us by the patriots of the Revolution.

It was a moment of intense interest, and made a crisis in the life of a statesman. The question in fact was, shall the Senate stand firm as an independent department of the Government, or fall beneath the frowns of Executive power? The Senator who took the lead in opposition to these high prerogative doctrines, pushed to extremes which seemed to defy both the law and the Constitution, occupied a position of high responsibility, and marked out the course which should characterize the proceedings of the Senate.

Most ably and fearlessly did Mr. Poindexter meet the crisis; he gave life and animation to the body of which he was a member, and to every freeman who filled the crowded galleries of the Senate on that memorable occasion. Knowing no fear himself, he defied the instruments of power, and compelled even the President himself to hesitate and pause in his mad career.

His rebukes, in connection with his able associates in that day's debate, had the desired effect. The explanatory Message came; it was a paper intended for popular effect; it was held to be a mere attempt at evasion, and wholly unsatisfactory. Both papers were condemned, and refused a place on the journals of the Senate. Never, perhaps, in all history was there an instance of such an appeal by one department against a co-ordinate branch of the Government, filled with captivating insinuations to entice and delude the multitude, which fell so dead upon the popular ear as did this Protest upon the American people. It was a mere *Brutum fulmen*. Whatever vitality it had, only recoiled upon its authors, while it exasperated the enemies of arbitrary power to more strenuous exertions; and thousands who were then sleeping in apathy rallied under the Whig banner of Liberty and Law. The elections for members of the State Legislature in the ancient Commonwealth of Virginia were at that time in progress, and it is evident that this remarkable paper was issued and circulated to operate on these elections in favor of the dominant party; but it had precisely the opposite tendency: the people were aroused to a sense of the dangers by which they were surrounded, threw off the shackles of party, and nobly sustained the cause of the Constitution. Throughout the whole of this interesting contest Mr. Poindexter sustained himself in a manner worthy of an American Senator. As an evidence of the estimation in which he is held by his enlightened compeers, he was, near the close of that session of Congress, after the Vice President had, according to usage, left the Chair, chosen President *pro tem.* of the Senate, than which a more distinguished honor could not have

been conferred on him. To preside over the deliberations of the most eminent and distinguished body in the world, by its own selection, is a tribute to the merit, influence, character, and standing of Senator Poindexter, of which he can never be deprived by Executive denunciations, or the malicious efforts of the cabal by whom he is surrounded. This biographical sketch which we have given of Mr. Poindexter, contains no reference to a great variety of political events which have occurred to him in the progress of his useful life. Most of the political contests in which he has been engaged, have been marked by bitter and uncompromising hostility on the part of his enemies, and the zealous and devoted support on the part of his friends. Of a warm and ardent temper himself, whenever he makes an enemy it is certain to be a bitter one; and whenever he has a friend, it is as certain to be a devoted and sincere friend. Frank, candid, and open in whatever he does, disdaining concealment or subterfuge, he sometimes exposes himself to attack; but the enthusiastic friendship which such an independent course of conduct ever creates, more than compensates him for the annoyance which he may incur from that cause by the fierce attacks of his opponents.

Few men who have been elevated to high trusts by their countrymen, can boast of a stronger hold on the affections and confidence of the people. Throughout his whole life he has held a lofty bearing, which forbade the least condescension or compromise of his honest opinions for the sake of office; always resting his claims on the merit of his public acts, and accepting office only for the sake of rendering service to his

country when it was tendered to him by the unsolicited, unbought suffrages of the people who knew how to appreciate the value of the services he had rendered them. He has never left any station to which he was called by his country during his whole public life, but with increased reputation for firmness of purpose, and the most unbending integrity in the discharge of his duties.

He entered the Senate of the United States an invalid; was incapable of any exertion which required him to stand more than a few minutes on his feet. He has been nevertheless the most attentive member belonging to the body. He is spoken of among his compeers as the "business man of the Senate." Hence it will be seen what gross injustice has been done him by the false coloring given in the pensioned presses of the day to his private habits. No man who indulges himself in sensual pleasures or intemperance, which his enemies have falsely imputed to him, could discharge so many important duties as devolve on him with the promptitude and ability which he has done, in a manner alike honorable to himself and useful to his country. The common sense of all mankind must attest the correctness of this conclusion, drawn from facts which appear on the Journals of the Senate, and are well known to the reading public. But above all, he has maintained a standing in that body which might satisfy any unprejudiced mind of the purity of his character, public and private, to say nothing of his distinguished talents. In 1832, when Mr. Calhoun, then Vice President of the United States, retired from the Chair, Mr. Poindexter, being then a young member, received

the votes of twenty-two Senators to fill the vacant Chair, and would have been chosen but for the scrupulous delicacy towards his distinguished opponent entertained by several of their mutual friends. He has since displayed the qualities of his mind more fully to his associates. They have marked his course in public and private life, and with every opportunity to judge of him according to his merits. These illustrious men and patriots, without solicitation or the most distant intimation of a wish on his part, placed him in the elevated situation of their presiding officer; at a time too, when a casualty which might have happened and was not unlooked for by many, would have made him the permanent Vice President of the United States. In retiring then from the Senate, which it is probable he may do at the close of the present session, he will have the proud and lasting consolation of their high testimonial of his worth both as a man and a patriot of unspotted integrity. This mark of distinction bestowed on Mr. Poindexter, could not have been the result of mere party organization, for the obvious reason that among the members with whom he has for several years past usually acted, there are many whose distinguished abilities ought to have claimed precedence over him. It is a situation which no Senator could seek without degradation to himself and certain disappointment.

No sacrifice of dignity or moral feeling was called for on the occasion to subserve party purposes, and none such were made in the selection of him on whom the honor was conferred. But the mortification felt by the President and his servile retainers at the event, has secured to the Senator their bitter-

est denunciations, without regard to truth or decency. The wrath of President Jackson was kindled into a flame, which burst forth with all the violence and impetuosity of unrestrained invective and passion which characterize that individual. The inventive powers of those who conduct the organized presses of the Administration from Maine to Louisiana, were put in requisition to fulminate "surmise and general abuse," destitute of all foundation, or of proof to sustain them, relying, as they did, on the credulity of the ignorant and the influence of party discipline to bring into disrepute the object of their malice. These engines of power and patronage have not failed to perform all that was expected of them in this crusade on the character of a man who enjoyed so large a share of their hatred, because his voice has so loudly and so forcibly exposed the corruptions of this Administration. We have adverted to these matters, not to investigate them or to complain of their effects, for they are too insignificant to outlive the fleeting moment at which they are uttered; but we have thought it a fit occasion to show in what light they were viewed by the most enlightened portion of the people of Mississippi, and of other western States, among whom Mr. Poin-dexter has spent nearly his whole life since he reached the years of maturity. The subjoined extracts from the numerous and highly flattering addresses presented to him during the summer of the past year by his own independent and high-minded constituents, many of whom have never heretofore been his political friends, will evince the great indignation which animated their bosoms at the foul attempts made to cast a shade over the reputation of their faithful and dis-

tinguished Senator. (7) We leave them without comment to the judgment of every candid and impartial reader. No public

(7) Extract of an address from the citizens of Louisville, Kentucky, to Gov. Poindexter, dated August 1834.

"In the esteem and admiration of the high-minded and virtuous, you cannot but find an ample recompense for that *base* and *vulgar* detraction which, in common with others, you are fated to encounter, and which is but part of the established system by which lawless power is vainly seeking to prostrate every individual who boldly withstands its all-grasping usurpations."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Lexington, Mississippi, to Gov. Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"The undersigned have been appointed by a number of the citizens of Holmes county a committee to invite you to a public dinner, to be given at the town of Lexington at such time as may be designated by yourself. They are well aware that this would be but a poor and very inadequate token of that profound respect and gratitude which they, in common with their fellow-citizens from other parts of the State, cherished for one who has distinguished himself as the champion of public liberty, and who, during a long and eventful life of public service, has always been found upon the side of the Constitution, and of the great principles of Republican Government. * * * * * We cannot believe, sir, that the people of Mississippi, whom you have served so long and so faithfully, will ever refuse to appreciate and reward such service. But if the efforts of unprincipled partisans and designing demagogues to disparage you in the estimation of the people of this State should prove successful, and you should be doomed, after having been its glory, to be the innocent cause of its disgrace, by justifying against it in your own person the foul charge of ingratitude, your fellow-citizens elsewhere, whose mental vision has not been dazzled or destroyed by the *glory* of a name, and who, regarding party in its only true light as "the madness of the many for the benefit of the few," have nobly refused to surrender their independence at the bidding of its leaders, will not fail to do justice to your character. And when the clouds of popular prejudice and delusion here shall have passed away, the statesman who despised the menaces and scorned the blandishments of power, and stood

man was ever received with stronger demonstrations of gratitude, personal respect, and confidence, than was Mr. Poindexter.

up for liberty and the Constitution in the darkest hour of their peril, will be remembered with gratitude, and fondly cherished in the hearts of his countrymen."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Vernon, Madison County, Mississippi, to Gov. Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"Knowing that you are one of that patriotic band in the Senate of the United States who have used their best exertions in defence of the Constitution and Laws, and who have rendered such distinguished services to preserve the established usages of our country, to promote the honor as well as the character of our State, we cannot refrain from expressing our most sincere gratitude. We have not viewed with unconcern the reckless and systematic efforts of your enemies at home to destroy your character, and we but speak the sentiments of those whom we represent, when we assure you that the course you have pursued in the late protracted session of Congress has received our warmest approbation, and that we maintain undiminished confidence in your Republican principles, and firm determination to guard the interests of your constituents and defend the rights of the people."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Columbus, Lowndes County, Mississippi, to Gov. Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"The friends of constitutional liberty in this section of the State, have watched with lively interest the noble exertions you have made for the preservation of those rights which are reserved to the States by the Constitution; and they heartily approve of the able and independent manner in which you resisted at the threshold the late wanton attack of the Executive upon the Constitution and Laws, and the firmness and ability with which you have exposed to the people the corruptions of a proscriptive and profligate administration."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Woodville Mississippi, to the Hon. George Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"At a time when the wisdom and forecast of our wisest statesmen were most severely tasked to meet the artful advances of encroaching power, and the energy of the most unflinching was needed to repel the attacks of lawless hands upon the sacred temple of liberty itself, it is our pride to say (and we do but reiterate the voice of a grateful people), that you were found equal to every emergency; gathering strength as difficulties multiplied, and never losing

dexter on his return home after the adjournment of the eventful session of Congress in 1834. He was hailed by the enlightened and patriotic citizens of the State as the independent and fearless defender of their rights, and of constitutional

sight of the guiding star of principle in the gloomiest period of the night. To a fame not inferior to that of Calhoun and Leigh, you have added a name, equalled only by those of Webster and Preston, of Clay and Tyler, your great compeers in the Senate.

"Returning under such circumstances among your old and earliest friends, with new claims on their confidence from new labors in their behalf, it affords us the highest pleasure to welcome you again to your ancient home and its hospitalities. At no time more than the present since the days of the Revolution has the faithful public servant so much needed the cheering voice of his constituents to sustain his spirits and nerve his exertions in the great contest for principle now waging in our beloved country, between the friends of regulated constitutional government and the abettors of unrestrained power. Whatever may be the result of this struggle, we wish to assure you that your services are duly estimated here among your oldest friends, and that if, in the order of an all-wise Providence, the standard of American liberty is to be hewn down by the sword of despotism, one arm—the strong arm of Mississippi, will be still raised in its defence, and one voice—the united voice of her sons, will be heard above the din of war calling the true hearted to the rescue."

Extract of an address from the citizens of Port Gibson to the Hon. George Poindexter, dated August 1834.

"It gives us great pleasure to state that your able and patriotic defence of the Constitution and the Laws against executive usurpations is justly appreciated by a large portion of the people of this county. That such is the fact they hope to have the pleasure of assuring you by a personal interview."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Clinton, Mississippi, to the Hon. George Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"The rancor and vituperation that pervades some of the public prints; the war of extermination that is now so violently raging against you, one of the oldest and ablest of the adopted sons of Mississippi; the systematic effort of the parasites of the present Administration to mislead the public mind and to pervert and misrepresent every act of your political and private valuable life, because you have dared to protect the rights of your State and the liberties of the people against the startling assumptions of Executive usurpation,

liberty. At all the public dinners given him, as a manifestation of the high sense entertained by his constituents of his eminent services, he was toasted with acclamation as the "*Old Ironsides of Mississippi.*" His calumniators were com-

have caused every lover of good government to lament the degeneracy of the times, and have inspired him with a determination once more to be free.

"If the people of Mississippi are to have their ears stunned with the coarse vituperation and personal abuse of yourself, instead of a calm inquiry into the facts of your late history; if man-worship shall still strengthen the cords of party prejudice to the exclusion of truth and patriotism, then indeed have we greatly mistaken the character of our citizens."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Gallatin, Mississippi, to the Hon. George Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"In discharging this duty, the committee feel proud in having the opportunity to tender to you assurances of the undiminished confidence which they, in common with a large portion of their fellow-citizens, have in your unyielding firmness and devotion to the constitution and laws of your country. They want language to express the feelings of pride which have been inspired by the fearless, independent, and dignified stand taken by the majority of the Senate of the United States, when the liberties of the nation were threatened to be swept away by the current of Executive usurpation and Executive patronage, and that of that patriotic band of Senators you were the leader.

"Permit us to indulge the pleasing hope that you will accord to our countrymen the satisfaction of meeting with them at the festive board, and to add our best wishes for the long continuance of your health, happiness, and usefulness to our common country."

Extract of an Address from the Citizens of Fayette, Mississippi, to the Hon. George Poindexter, dated September 1834.

"While thus manifesting our confidence in your patriotism, and our satisfaction at the able, persevering, and independent discharge of your official duties, we would also bear our testimony to that patriotic devotion which has secured to the Senate of the United States the admiration and gratitude of the American people. So long as that body remains thus conscious of its rights, and fearless and vigilant in maintaining them, we may confidently trust that arbitrary power and servile adulation will receive a moral and practical check, that shall confirm and perpetuate the liberty and Constitution of our country."

pared to the maniac who threw mud "against the walls of a magnificent temple, formed of pure, impenetrable marble." He was greeted as the pride and ornament of the State; their own bright Star, which the other members of the Confederacy had combined to honor. On the occasion of a festival to which he was the invited guest, in the city of Natchez, a citizen of great respectability and distinction, who had with his own hands shaped a beautiful goblet, made of a part of the oak taken from the old Frigate Constitution, presented it to him as an appropriate gift to a man "who had so ably and manfully defended the Constitution of the United States;" to which Mr. Poindexter made a short reply, which he concluded with the following appropriate sentence: "Whenever, sir. I shall sip the beverage from this cup, it will not fail to animate me to renewed efforts in supporting and defending the principles of our free Constitution, of which that gallant ship was a prototype and representative on the great highway of nations."

We have thought these facts worthy of preservation, especially at the present moment, when all the power and patronage of the Executive and its pensioned organs are put in active operation to fix the stain of moral and political profligacy on the character of Mr. Poindexter. His respectable and intelligent constituents, among whom he is best known, have given the lie direct to the former, and his public acts abundantly vindicate him against the latter. It is his stubborn and inflexible political integrity, and his utter scorn of the corrupt minions who fatten on the spoils of the National Treasury, that has brought on him all the malicious vituperation which we have

seen and heard for the last three or four years; which, disregarding the sacred dictates of truth and of moral decency, seeks only the destruction of him who is marked out as its victim. That he is free from errors is not pretended. No man living, or who ever has lived, can claim exemption from the imperfections and frailties common to our nature. But those errors do not impair the amiable qualities of his heart, or tend to the injury of his fellow-man. We are justified by a candid retrospect on the history of his past life, in making the declaration that he never intentionally did wrong to any human being in his private intercourse and transactions with society. We call on his bitterest enemy to controvert this declaration, not by broad and undefined defamation, but by proofs entitled to credit and respect, if any such can be found on the face of the earth. This we are well satisfied will never be attempted, as any search for such evidence would be vain and hopeless. Calumny is a weapon much more *convenient* and powerful, when addressed to the credulous under the sanction of a popular name. The political saints! the mock patriots! self-styled democrats! who surround the palace and worship at the footstool of arbitrary power, do not fail to use this weapon on all who rebuke their insolence and boldly attack the god of their idolatry in his entrenchments. Thus it ever has been, and thus it will be to the end of time.

Mr. Poindexter is about six feet in height, of slender frame, and strongly marked features; his eye is keen and penetrating, indicating great decision and energy of character. His mind is clear and vigorous in its conceptions; and he gives

utterance to his thoughts in words at once bold and explicit, and calculated to make an abiding impression on all who hear him. Every arrow which he throws hits its object; every argument he marshals is a strong argument. If we were called on to say what particularly distinguishes him, we should answer "*a most remarkable common sense.*" On every subject which he touches he enters directly, and without the flourish of a studied proemial, presents his views in language clear, strong, and forcible. His illustrations do not partake of the higher flights of eloquence or rhetorical ornament; in these he seldom indulges; but in the adaptation of words to the precise object which he seeks to develop, no man is more happy or skillful. For instance, who could have found more appropriate words to describe the cabal who rule and control "the Government" than "Kitchen Cabinet?"

To call things by their right names is with him a prominent characteristic. He might be thought by many to possess a severe, intolerant temper and disposition. But nothing is more remote from the truth. He is mild and courteous to all who differ with him in opinion; always as ready to forget and forgive an injury as he is to resent it, if his high sense of honor should demand retribution.

He is hospitable and generous to a fault. He has freely and liberally expended his ample resources on the poor, whenever he found a worthy object in distress wanting the relief which he could afford them. As a Senator, he has

discharged all his duties with firmness, ability, and the most untiring industry.

He shuns no labor or responsibility on the numerous important committees on which he is placed. As Chairman of the Committee on the Public Lands, he has been assiduously engaged in collecting testimony for the purpose of exposing the gross and unparalleled frauds in the recent sales of the public lands and Indian reservations. The evidence on these subjects is so carefully concealed, so widely dispersed, and so difficult to be obtained from those who alone are acquainted with the facts as they really exist, that it has not yet been possible with all his exertions to bring the investigation to a close. Much, however, has been done, and we may expect a report in part from that Committee during the present session.

Such is a brief and imperfect outline of the life of a statesman who has been to his own State a faithful Representative, and to the whole nation an honest disinterested politician. He may, with many other distinguished patriots, be driven from the high trust which he has so ably filled, by the misplaced confidence of the great body of the American people, in the chieftain who now rules with despotic sway the destinies of our beloved country. Should this be the case, his patriotic countrymen can but regret it. He will, however, carry with him into his retirement their best affections and grateful recollections. He will leave the Senate at the head of the most illustrious body which ever adorned this or any

other country, without a single stain of self-degradation or reproach. We may in all truth and sincerity say of him, in his own emphatic language, that "he has ever preferred liberty to power, the constitution and law to an imperial dictator, and the good of his country to all other considerations."





WERT
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Grantville, Pa
March - April 1989

